Notes on the Mechanics of the Poetic Image The testament of a stone: Price 20 Cents: The testament of a stone

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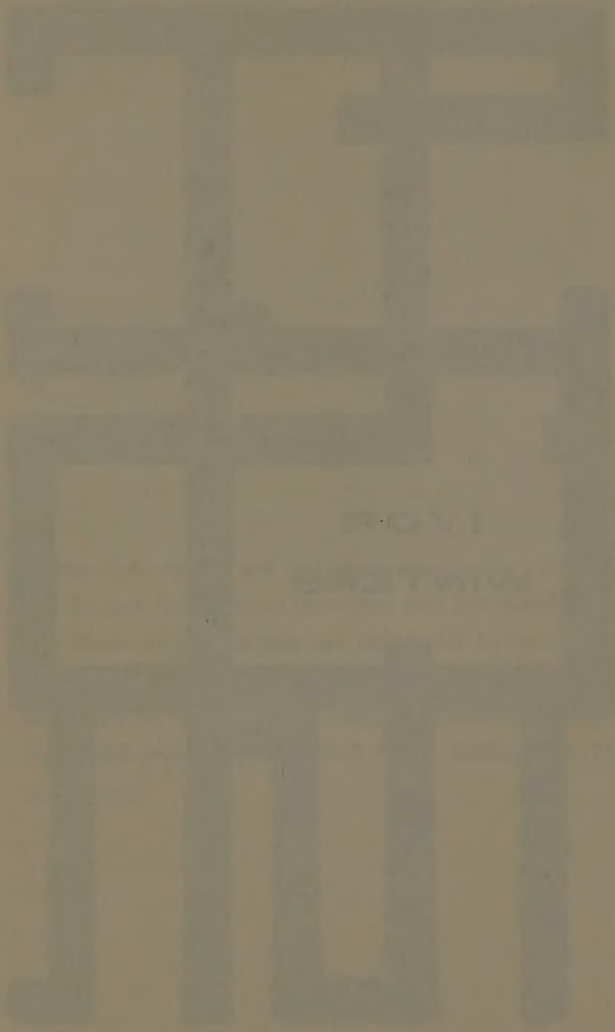

NUMBER EIGHT

THE TESTAMENT OF A STONE

BEING

NOTES ON THE MECHANICS OF THE POETIC IMAGE

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FOREWORD.

These notes presuppose a knowledge of Fenollosa's *The Chinese Written Character*, a large part of T. S. Eliot's *The Sacred Wood*, and scattered paragraphs from Pound, Lewis, Croce, and the Hindus.

I reserve the right to add to or alter these notes later in case of any second publication. It is possible that they are not complete (the last section is obviously incomplete, as my interest in it is temporarily secondary), but they are an attempt to incite the beginnings of a scientific criticism of poetry, which up to dale we do not have, except in a few scattered fragments.

The poet himself will be more sensitive to, or more moved by, some material than other material, will perceive it more completely, and so will write his best poems when dealing with it. Speculation upon the sensitivity of the individual poet and its possible modification by his environment is of some psychological interest and perhaps more «human interest», but it has little to do with the art of poetry. The degree of fusion of the parts of a poem will depend upon the degree of fusion of the poet with his material, and that, to be sure, is the result of the nature

of his sensitivity and his environment. But one is usually — and theoretically — forced by circumstances to approach the poet and his environment — if one so desires — through his poems, and not the other way round. Supposing one to be possessed of some intelligence, it is possible, after a reasonable amount of study, to decide whether a poem represent a perfect fusion of perceptions or not, and supposing one to have some education, it is possible, after similar study, to decide whether the poem be original or merely a restatement of the perceptions of others. As different poets are moved equally by different types of material, finished poems, composed of different types of material, may be equally intense; thus indicating that the material is of no importance to the critic, who is dealing with poems; but only to the poet, who is dealing with material, and that is his own affair.

The cause of a perfectly fused poem is the fusion of the poet's consciousness with an object or a group of objects of whatever nature. The means by which this fusion is achieved is the poet's « technique ». In the mature poet, the technique is the medium of fusion; and the ratio of what the poet sees or feels to what he gets down is in direct proportion to the perfection of his technique. Why one poet is moved by this and another by that, it is impossible to say. It is possible only to remark the fact. But technique can be analysed, and analysed minutely; and this analysis may be of value to other poets in perfecting and extending the range of their perceptions, and it may be of value to critics, private and public, insofar as it may make them more acutely aware of their poets' achievements.

A poem is a state of perfection at which a poet has arrived by whatever means. It is a stasis in a world of flux and indecision, a permanent gateway to waking oblivion, which is the only infinity and the only rest. It has no responsibilities except to itself and its own perfection — neither to the man who may come to it with imperfect understanding nor to the mood from which it may originally have sprung. It is not a means to any end, but is in itself an end, and it, or one of the other embodiments of beauty, is the only end possible to the man of intellect.

The artist whose deity is art, has a religion as valid and as capable of producing great art as any religion of the past or as

the recently defined religion of money. As a conscious and intelligent being, no other religion will be possible for him, and he cannot, because of his religion, be called a decadent, an heretic.

Driven into a corner of which we are unaware, we pursue our ends. For in infinity, those who withdraw in terror are those who drive us off with bitterness, and at the same instant, in the same thought and gesture. Yet equanimity is all we seek.

A poem is the result of a poet moving in a millieu. A poet is born into a certain intellectual and physical milieu, and this milieu may, to some extent, form the poet. But the poet will also be born with certain peculiar and unchangeable qualities, and these will, in the course of time, modify the milieu with respect to the particular poet. If the poet be of a very plastic nature, he may be greatly changed by his milieu. If he be of a more or less immobile nature, he will absorb into his own mind, and, in the process of obsorption, change as becomes necessary, such part of his milieu as is to some extent forced upon him.

A poet's technique is a portion of the milieu into which he is born (tradition) modified by his peculiar qualities to serve their needs.

The milieu of any place and time is a relatively constant factor. The peculiar qualities of individual poets are infinitely variable. The resulting milieu of the individual poet is therefore infinitely variable. So it is infantile to say that a poet « does not interpret his time », to demand that he write in any specified manner. It is infantile to say that he can do this or that only with this or that technique. The individual can only say truly, « I can do this or that only with this or that technique ». And even then he cannot be too sure.

So that the poem can be judged, not in relation to any time or place, nor to any mode of thought, but to itself alone, and as a part of literature; for it is not a means, but an end. The mind that can judge a poem accurately is very rare — even more rare than the mind that can create a poem. For this act of weighing requires a mind infinitely balanced, infinitely sensitive, and infi-

nitely familiar with all the technical phases of the medium. Such a mind is, with one exception in a thousand, the mind of the master poet.

The intellectual poet is often accused of obscurity, merely because his reader is unfamiliar with the milieu in which he moves. If we imagine a poet writing in our own language but on a remote planet, whose vegetation and population, whose entire physical aspect, are different from anything we know, and expressing himself largely in terms of the physical, we cannot imagine ourselves receiving from his poems more than a very blurred impression. So is the poet moving in a world that is largely composed of thought and otherwise greatly modified by thought, to the reader unacquainted with the philosophies.

The poet moving in a world that is largely thought, so long as he regard it curiously and as a world, perceives a grassblade. These specific things are the material of the image, of art. When he loses his sense of the infinite nature of his world and organizes it into a knowable and applicable principle, he loses sight of the particulars themselves and sees their relationships to each other and his newly-created whole; and so becomes a philosopher; for it is only in the infinite that the particular can be detected as a complete and uncoordinated whole; but he may still have occasional perceptions, and at times revert to the poet. When he becomes more interested in the application of his principle, in its possible effects, than in the principle itself, he becomes a preacher and is lost; for now he not only thinks in generalities instead of in perceptions, but he attempts to save a humanity that he cannot possibly understand by fitting it into a mutilated fragment of an infinity whose nature he once felt, but could never understand, and has now forgotten.

The poet, in creating, must lose himself in his object. If he becomes more interested in himself observing than in his object, and still continues to write about his object rather than himself observing, he will create a mannerism but no image. It is from this weakness that the various familiar pretty and paternal mannerisms arise. Such a mannerism may be held down to the point of producing poetry of whatever degree of impurity, or it may not.

The poet who is preoccupied with his object desires a speech without idiom and a style without mannerism, that the clarity of his perception may not be clouded by inessentials. In any absolute sense, both are impossible, but both can be closely approximated.

Perhaps it is true that the poet, moving through his world, reaches, for chemical or other reasons, a point of spiritual intensity, and that those objects that fall under his eye or his mind's eye at this point are transformed into something simpler and greater than actuality, withor without his consciousness of any sequence save the actual sequence of their appearance; that the reproduction of this simplification in words will reproduce in the reader the original emotion or point of intensity. Perhaps it is true that the poet, moving throught his world, becomes aware of beautiful existences, and being moved by them to a sufficient point of intensity, is able to reproduce them in words with sufficient accuracy to create in his reader the emotion which they created in him. Or perhaps, and this is probably nearer to the truth, he is sufficiently moved by certain beautiful existences, to be able to create other beautiful existences; and this approaches T. S. Eliot's analogy of the catalyst, and his « significant emotion », which is probably the only sound statement of the creative process that we have.

All functions of man save the creation of art and pure though tend to complicate his physical life without simplifying his mental life. The sciences, as abstractions, might have the same value as art. Indescriminately applied, they have wrecked the world.

SECTION I.

Definition of Observation, Perception, Image, and anti-Image.

It has been said that art is an elimination of the superfluous, but this statement is capable of several interpretations. It is certain, however, that the poetic image is an elimination of the superfluous in a definite and fundamental sense. Everyone of whatever degree of intelligence, walking about the world, sees certain

things: trees growing, their leaves and branches moving in the wind; bees flying across fields; men and women working in the fields or walking in the streets or moved by various passions and emotions. These sights and others of a similar nature may be called *observation*. If I say: « I saw a man walking », or: « I saw night come », it will convey no sharp or lasting impression to the brain of the listener. It is a general statement, which is a vague statement, like a mist without form, a block of unhewn granite, a chaos.

But there are persons who see those things which differentiate one observation from another: they see the outline in the mist. The vision of this outline may be called *perception*. And there are yet other persons, fewer in number and of finer vision, who can take the outline from the mist and make it stand alone. This is done, in poetry, by seeing and placing in juxtaposition two or more observations that have one quality in common: that is, each of these observations will be differentiated from other observations of its class by the same perception; and when these observations are placed together they will fuse at the point where they are the same, or, to be more exact, *they will be the same at one point*. These two perceptions, coming together with an almost infinite speed across the mental distances that naturally lie between two separate obserbations (such as a man walking and the coming of night) cause a kind of mental vibration that is known as aesthetic emotion. Or, to state it in another fashion, this fusion, or sameness at one point in two observations, reinforces that point, and makes it stand out as clearly above the vaguenesses of the two observations as those two observations stand out above a state of no-observation or unconsciousness. And perhaps these two statements of the phenomenon are not incompatible. This phenomenon may be called an *image*. The image, in the case of the two observations used as examples, is:

At one stride comes the dark.

The quotation may help to clear the ground.

The image, so defined, being a fusion of sense-perceptions, *presents* the emotion: that is, the emotion is seen in the concrete and acts directly, without the aid of thought, just as the sight of a tree registers directly, without the aid of thought. But it is

possible in *thinking* of observations, to find intellectual *correlations* that are not evident to the simple senses, but that may transmit an aesthetic emotion, not directly, as in the case of sense perceptions, but through the intellect. Here the emotion is transmitted by intercomment, rather than by fusion. This phenomenon may be called the *anti-image*, as the sense-impressions of the observations do not here fuse at any point. It will be noted that the anti-image, where a physical fusion is not intended, is different from an attempted image, or fusion of sense-perceptions that is not successful.

As the image and anti-image make a sharp and lasting impression on the brain, and as the simple observation does not, the image and anti-image stay, and the observations disappear; and this is the process of elimination that was alluded to above. It is that quality in an observation of the approach of night that is different from any other observation of the approach of night, that gives such an observation a life of its own. And it is this differentiating, or unique, quality in any observation, that, when presented permanently, by means of an image or anti-image, is known as beauty.

The terms, *observation*, *perception*, and *image*, may have been used at various times with meanings slightly different from those I have given them; but I have applied them to certain phenomena, defined as clearly as I can define them, for lack of better terms. The phenomena seem to me sufficiently distinguishable from one another. It may be argued that a perception, as I have defined it, does not really exist until it becomes an image; but this possibility can be taken into consideration without disturbing the trend of my discussion. The anti-image is the only pure logopeia; but as the term *logopeia* has been applied in ways that do not seem to me accurate, I shall not here use it.

SECTION II.

Types of Perception.

Perceptions may be divided into two general types: those perceptions which are expressed in the *sound* of words, and those perceptions which are expressed in the *meaning* of words.

The first of these types will be referred to in this essay as

sound-perceptions. Sound perceptions possess two qualities : tone and rhythm. The first of these is the quality of individual vowel or consonant or syllabic sounds. The second is the rate and variation of movement from tone to tone. It will be seen that tone and rhythm are inseparable, but occasionally one or the other seems to predominate. This results from a perfect or nearly perfect fusion of the predominant sound quality with the meaning of the words, and an imperfect fusion of the other sound quality. Insofar as this is true of any poem, that poem will be imperfect.

Perfections which are expressed in the meaning of words may be called *meaning-perceptions*. They fall roughly into two classes : perceptions of concrete facts of which one becomes aware through the simple senses, and which may be called *sense-perceptions;* and perceptions of abstract facts or qualities — that is, of facts or qualities which are imperceptible to the unaided senses — of which one becomes aware through thinking about a concrete or abstract fact, and which may be called *thought-perceptions*.

SECTION III.

Types of the Image and anti-Image.

1.

There is the simple physical movement, not « caught » in any fusion of the meaning of words, but rather in a fusion of the sound of words and a simple statement of the movement — in the fusion of the sound perception and a simple meaning perception. The movement has no necessary connotations as a movement : that is, it is not a movement one thinks of as having any relationship to sorrow, joy, or ecstasy. But any unemotional physical movement, stated cleanly and in psychological order, in a rhythm that fuses with that movement, may become a profound image. By fusing with the movement, I do not mean that the rhythm should imitate with its own movement the physical movement that it contains, but rather that it should purify that movement as it appears in actual physical life, giving it a regularity

or at least organized variation of beat, and usually greatly accelerating it; so that the movement takes on something of the nature of a dance movement, but again is much purer and swifter than even a dance movement, by nature of its limitations, can be. From this last it may be seen that a movement that has been purified and formalized to a certain extent in actual life, such as a dance or religious procession, and which has, therefore, a certain emotional connotation in itself, can be further formalized, purified, in a poem, so that it takes on a new significance — even if that new significance be only a variation upon the purification already effected in the dance or religious procession. There are also movements in actual life that are expressions or semi-expression of emotion, such as joy, sorrow, etc., and these may, as well as other movements, be given form simply by a rhythm; but the danger here lies in the temptation offered to the weak, at least, to be content with a lax rhythm and to trust to the connotations of the movement to «put hover» the emotion; which is akin to the use of an inherited symbolism or any other sentimentality. The pure form of this type of image, that is, the physical movement without connotations, animated merely by a rhythm, is apt to produce the cleanest beauty. The last-named form of the image seems to me the least desirable, as it cannot possibly be freed from at least a taint of sentimentality, though this taint, in certain cases and if handled by a master, may have a value.

We may, for lack of a shorter name, call the type of image discussed in the last paragraph, the *simple physical movement fused with a rhythm*. This image seems to occur most often in rhymed poems that move to a fixed metre. There seems to be a cumulative effect, sometimes, in the still-echoing rhythm of several preceding stanzas. The same cumulative effect may come in poems whose metre varies as much as or less than, say, that of the *Ancient Mariner*. It would, I should think, be difficult to produce this cumulative effect in a meter not having a large amount of repetition; and certainly the reinforcement of rhyme is an aid; but the use of the *simple physical movement fused with a rhythm* does not depend upon cumulative rhythm. Cumulative rhythm is merely a possible modification, or, sometimes, intensification.

Two of the finest examples of this image that I know — examples of the physical movement without, in itself, any emo-

tional connotations — are in the openin of T. Gautier's *Les Affres de la Mort :*

O toi qui passes par ce cloître,
Songe à la mort ! — Tu n'est pas sûr
De voir s'allonger et décroître,
Une autre fois, ton ombre au mur.

Frère, peut-être cette dalle
Qu'aujourd'hui, sans songer aux morts,
Tu soufflettes de ta sandale,
Demain pèsera sur ton corps !

The physical movement here is in the first, third, and fourth lines of the first stanza, and in the third line of the second stanza. These lines are slightly modified from without by the « Songe à la mort ! », but the modification is slight and not such as to cloud their value as examples. Another example of this type of image in one of its less pure forms is to be found in the latter half of Gerard Hopkins' *The Habit of Perfection :*

O feel-of-primrose hands, O feet
That want the yield of plushy sward,
But you shall walk the golden street,
And you unhouse and house the Lord.

The last two lines show the purification in verse of a movement that has already been purified in life as a religious symbol. H. D. has achieved in free verse animations of physical movements that have no emotional connotations :

I saw the first pear
as it fell —
the honey-seeking, golden-banded,
the yellow swarm
was not more fleet than I,
(spare us from loveliness)
and I fell prostrate
crying :... »

The movement of the first two lines has in itself no emotional connotation whatever, the movement of the next three lines has infinitely little, and the movement of the seventh and eigth lins have a very definite one. All three are handled successfully and have their place in the poem.

The simple physical movement fused with a rhythm is the commonest variation of the *simple physical fact fused with a rhythm,* which may or may not have movement. This image need not be visual.

1.a.

The statement of simple thought, or the statement of a simple physical fact, punctuated or commented upon by a rhythm, is the simplest form of what Pound has roughly classed as logopeia, and of what I have called the anti-image. A rhythm that has traditional associations, or innate (i. e., more remote or not immediately obviously traditional) associations, or one that has acquired associations in the given poem, by previous fusion, may comment upon its meaning-content either by contrast or augmentation. It will be seen that each type of image has its converse, or anti-image, and this first type of anti-image is the converse of the simple physical fact fused with a rhythm. Laforgue achieves this anti-image by putting a ridiculous fact into a traditionally plaintive metre, or by putting a sentimental or tragic fact into a ridiculous metre, or by various shadings between these two extremes. The result is one phase of his rather mournful satire :

Allez, stérile ritournelles,
La vie est vraie et criminelle.

2.

The second type of image is the *complex physical fact fused with a rhythm.* This is the same as the first type of image, except that here the fusion is between two or more sense-percep-

tions and one sound-perception. The line quoted in *Section I* of these notes belonged to this type of image, and also the third, fourth, and fifth lines of the quotation from H. D. (if taken as a unit). There are various devices for constructing an image of this sort, some of which I shall describe, that the image, when come upon, may be the more easily recognized.

First: The direct comparison of sense-perceptions, as in the so-called metaphor and simile. The line quoted in *Section I* is of this nature.

Second: The putting of two sense-perceptions in sequence, so that while they have no direct or grammatically indicated connection with each other, each reflects upon the other because of the quality they have in common:

So wore night; the East was gray;
White the broadfaced hemlock flowers....

Movements may be similarly put into sequence:

And Neptune made for thee a spumy tent,
And Pan made sing for thee his forest hive,

Here the first line is a fusion two sense-perceptions with one sound-perception, and the movement of the sound-perception, carrying with it an echo of the «spumy tent», holds over and dies into the movement of the humming bees.

Third: An adjective, being a generalization taken from a series of more or less related observations, may, if appleid to a more or less remote observation, effect a fusion. This is the «transferred epithet» of rethoric:

the parakeet —
trivial and humdrum on examination....

Fourth: It is perhaps not amiss to mention a certain fallacy fairly common to a large number of secondrate but occasionally good poets when they attempt to use this image. That fallacy is an attempt to give existence in that which we perceive as space to a perception that has no such existence, and to fuse this perception with that side of a second perception which actually exists in space. Or, to speak more concretely, to fuse, in the meaning of words, a perception of sound and some visual perception,

usually color. Now it seems that certain persons do sense a relationship between colors and sounds, but it is also certain that many of the persons who do so, disagree among themselves as to the details of this relationship. And even if it were possible to find an absolute ration, mathematical or perceptive, between sound waves, which move slowly through the air, and the hypothetical (and doubtful) light waves which move with terrific rapidity through an imponderable substance known as ether, it would not necessarily follow that related emotions would be produced by related waves, for these waves are perceived through entirely different organs, and the organs of perception are obviously factors of the emotion. Furthermore, as I have already inferred, sound *as we perceive it,* has no existence in space, but only in time, or what we perceive as time; for it is only that which is *seen* that can be said to fill space, which is a purely visual concept. But the visual, if it have existence in space, has also existence in time, and this existence is more evident if the visual perception have motion, which is a relation between space and time, and still more evident if that motion have rhythm, which is time consciously broken up and organized with respect to those existences and their intervals that it contains. Now sound, having existence in time, can also have rhythm. So it follows that whereas the auditory and the visual will have no common ground in that which we know as space, they will have a common ground in that which we know as time, and that common ground is rhythm — the actual rhythm of the thing perceived, and not the rhythm of the words containing the thing. Now if an auditory and a visual rhythm be stated in the meaning of words, a fusion may be possible :

And like a giant harp that hums
On always, and is always blending
The coming of what never comes
With what has past and had an ending,
The City trembles, throbs, and pounds
Outside, and through a thousand sounds
The small intolerable drums
Of Time are like slow drops descending.

Here the rhythm of the sound of the « drums of Time » and the rhythm of the motion of the drops fuse.

It must be recollected that in speaking of the rhythm of a sound, or rather of sounds, in this connection, I do not refer to the rhythm of sound waves, which belong to science and not to unaided human perception; but I refer to the rhythm or rate of movement from sound to sound, as those sounds actually strike, or may be imagined to strike, the ear. And similarly, I refer to actual visual perception of rhythm and not to the rhythm of light waves, which is imperceptible, as such, to the eye.

2.a.

The anti-image corresponding to the complex physical fact fused with a rhythm is of four possible sorts. In the first sort, that of two thought-perceptions and one sound perception, a fusion of the thought-perceptions is possible, as they are of the same substance. But these thought perceptions, having no physical existence, cannot fuse, but can only comment upon each other through the mind. The only example of this variation upon the second anti-image that I can find at present is in a poem of my own:

We perish, we
Who die in art,
With that surprise
Of one who speaks
To us, and knows
Wherein he lies.

The second variation upon this anti-image is composed of one sense-perception, one thought-perception, and one sound-perception intercommenting:

Streets that follow like a tedious argument
Of insidious intent,
To lead you to an overwhelming question.

The third variation is of two sense-perceptions which may or may not fuse, and one sound-perception that comments. The fourth variation is composed of two remotely separate facts, at least one of which must be physical and which fuses with the

rhythm and takes on an image existence of its own, as in the case of the simple physical fact fused with a rhythm. The unfused fact comments. This is sometimes known as the *conceit.* An example of the conceit is Donne's comparison of two souls to a pair of compasses, toward the end of the *Valediction Forbidding Mourning.*

3.

There is a third type of image that seems to fall about halfway between the first and second types that I have defined. This image is composed of two physical facts, each fused with the sound, and, while neither fused with each other nor commenting upon each other, altering and defining each other's value quite definitely, simply by the juxtaposition of their physical qualities or by the action of the one upon the other :

The maidens taste
And stray impassioned in the littering leaves.

The straying maidens and the littering leaves are here the physical facts. They have no point in common, as had the walking man and the approaching night of the first example, but they do fuse into a single movement, a single image, of which the sound of the whole is a part. And by that fusion, each is sharply limited, separated from the general.

3.a.

The corresponding anti-image is of two thought-perceptions placed together, and the one acting upon the other, to such an extent as to effect the defining of both, without any attempt at fusion or intercomment at one point :

the future of time is determined by the power of volition.

4.

A perception — almost invariably a sense-perception — that has acquired, by long association or by personal association or by personal association for whatever period of time, an emotional overtone or symbolic value, may be used in a poem, so long as it be given in the poem a new existence as image or anti-image. If the fusion or intercomment necessary to this existence be not achieved, the symbolic value of the perception is useless as the perception is without life. If, however, the perception be given this existence, the symbolism may augment the emotion of the image considerably, and the emotion resulting from the symbolism can scarcely be separated in the mind from the emotion resulting from the image. The symbolical overtone is more or less analagous to what is known in painting as « literary » beauty.

There are symbols in literature whose symbolic value is evident, and there are those whose symbolic value is only in part evident, and still others the mere existence of whose symbolic value is only implied. Glenway Wescott once wrote in a letter : « the legitimate field of movement clearly seen, intention unknown ».

Symbolism is commonly thought of as something vaguely metaphysical, but it need not be. Any fact or object which sums up or evokes any set of conditions or emotions, whatever their nature, is to some extent a symbol. Thus T. S. Eliot's Sweeny is symbolic of a certain type of ugliness, Rachel née Rabinovitch and the rest are symbolic of certain smaller divisions of that ugliness. Mr. Eliot gives movements to these figures that are very often of a quite impersonal nature — that is, they are movements that are in no wise connected with their ugliness or are presented with a curious detachment from their ugliness ; and these movements are usually of supreme sinuosity and beauty. So that, by placing these symbols of ugliness in contrast to the impersonal beauty of the movements of their flesh, he achieves at a single stroke the functions of the image and the anti-image — something that hovers between satire and agony.

The symbol must not be confused with the physical movement having emotional connotations, or expressing emotion ; for

the latter is concerned with specific instances only, while the former is expressive of a concept or whole field of emotion, such as ugliness, decay, or whatnot. And yet the symbol expresses this emotion not by stating the concept, but by evoking it or reminging one of it, through some quality of its own (the symbol's) limited and specific nature.

SECTION IV.

Upon the Nature of Words and Their Use.

It was assumed in the second section of these notes that words had two qualities : sound and meaning; and insofar as we are able to trust our sense, this assumption is justified. That a few words (such as articles) partake, in their meaning, more of the nature of a gesture or an indication than of a fact, does not alter the general truth of the assumption. In some words one will find that the sound of the word, and the thing for which that word stands, are perfectly fused, and constitute an image in themselves. Such words are the nouns, *leaves, dresses, dust, breath.* The word, *drum,* if not quite so perfect a fusion, is very nearly so; and after noting the sound and meaning qualities of this word, consider the word, *dumb,* the sound of which is nearly identical with that of *drum,* and the meaning of which, insofar as it is a word of silence, is the opposite. Here the sound and meaning are definitely not fused, and a problem is presented to the writer. The there are words that represent abstractions, whose meanings have no relationship to anything physical, and so can have no aesthetic necessity — that is, if the sound of any word can be proven to be other than accidental. Such a word is, for instance, *hypocritic.* Now consider these lines :

> *Daughters of Time, the hypocritic days,*
> *Muffled and dumb like barefoot dervishes,*
> *And marching single in an endless file,*
> *Bring diadems and fagots in their hands.*

Dumb, whose meaning is opposed to its sound, fuses its sound with the two sense-perceptions, *muffled* and *barefoot,* and extends and intensifies these perceptions. The sound of *hypocritic,*

an abstract word, presentes the short, bony, half-dance steps of the muffled dervishes. *Diadems*, a heavy-sounding word that stands for a bright object, fuses its sound with the muffled movement; and *fagots*, fairly well fused in itself, also contributes to the movement.

SECTION V.

Upon the Construction of the Poem, with Relation to the Image.

It is assumed that the parts of any poem have some reason for being placed in sequence. Otherwise they had better be left as separate poems.

In some poems, especially in narrative poems, one sometimes finds passages that, without great emotional value in themselves, serve to carry the action or thought from one image to another, and in this function may be necessary:

And a good south wind sprung up behind;
The Albatross did follow,
And every day, for food or play,
Came to the mariners' hollo.

The sound here does not fuse with the physical facts, nor is there any fusion between physical facts, nor can there be said to be any intercomment of perceptions. But this purely narrative passage has been made as concise as possible, and, being short, the rhythm, being the rhythm of the preceding stanzas which are successful images, carries something of an echo over into what would be an otherwise flat stanza. Often the first type of image will carry a narrative passage, or one of the types of anti-image a thought passage. Sometimes one of these purely narrative passages will come very close to being an image or anti-image.

Often a poem or a passage of a poem is made up of images that are closely related, or are sub-parts of a larger image, so that the poem or passage closely resembles an extended example of the second variation upon the second type of image.

Sometimes a definite emotion is produced by a sudden change of direction (in images of motion) from one image to the next. Note the last line of the first chorus in Swinburne's *Atalanta*. The departing image produces an effect of a somewhat centripetal nature.

Images of contrasting symbolic values may be so placed together that intercomment is achieved. T. S. Eliot has done this in *Sweeney among the Nightingales* and elsewhere.

One image of any type may act upon and limit another image, as one part of the third type of image acts upon and limits the other part.

Many poets have entirely omitted any intellectual sequence from one image to the next, depending upon an emotional unity, and there is nothing to be said against this. Other poets have atempted to carry the method even further, omitting all intellectual (syntactical) sequence within the image, or trying to, attempting to create aesthetic relationships from broken words and phrases. This is interesting, and may some day succeed. The difficulty with most of these experimenters up to date, however, is that, having cast out all other thought from their minds, they cannot cast out the clichés, the very old sentimentalities, which seem to be so deeply rooted as to be almost mental reflexes. Their poems become, then, desperate efforts to conceal these clichés under a broken exterior, which is evading the question.

Poetry of this nature is often compared to abstract painting or sculpture, and praised for this reason and for few others. And yet, if we reduce literature to complete abstraction — that is, sound without meaning — we no longer have literature, but music, and we must either adopt the notation of music or else adopt a new system of notation to provide for intonation as well as vowel and consonant sounds. And if we do not so reduce literature we inevitably retain an element of representation, however broken up and distorted. That is, if we imagine a potential sculptor, let us say, living in some strange realm where he is able to experience no sense-impressions — even impressions of his own body or any part of it — except impressions of that which

he may be able to create out of some imponderable substance that will take form as soon as definitely imagined, he will be able to imagine nothing, for he will have no concept of form, solidity. Indeed, he is very likely to be entirely unconscious. But give him a pebble — which will bring him to consciousness — and he will be able to imagine another pebble, and variations upon pebbles, and further variations upon those variations until he creates a world and an art. And having created a world of variations that no longer resemble each other closely, he may be able to resynthesize various forms into new forms that do not as a whole resemble anyhing in his world, but they will inevitably by representative in some degree, of whatever number of fragments of whatever number of things. And the steps between this type of art and the type that will in some definitely recognizable degree resemble a definite one of his variations upon the original pebble will be infinite in number and the differences between them infinitely slight. So that one can only say that piece of sculpture is good which *depends* upon its form and not upon its resemblance to something else; and one can not say truly that is best which resembles no natural form, for their is no such thing. Similarly, that poetry is good which is a perfect fusion of perceptions, and that which is an imperfect fusion of perceptions or depends mainly upon symbolical or other connotations is, to that extent, weak.

The poet wishing to write « abstract » poetry of this type, must not dispense with all thought, then, and write without consideration, for this will only lead him into the clichés mentioned above; but he must choose carefully the material which he wishes to break up and recombine, and work with at least as definite an intention and consciousness as any sculptor or painter.

Ivor Winters.